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RELEASED IN PART
B1, 1.4(D)PAGE 01 CARACA 01259 062128Z
ACTION ARA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACDA-15	AID-01	AMAD-01	A-01	CA-02	CCO-00
	CIAE-00	SJK-01	CTME-00	C-01	DEAE-00	DODE-00	DS-00
	FBO-01	HA-09	H-01	IMMC-01	INM-01	INRE-00	INR-01
	L-03	ADS-00	M-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OCS-06	OIG-01
	OMB-01	OPR-01	PA-01	PM-01	PRS-01	P-01	SCT-03
	SNP-01	SP-01	SR-01	SSC-01	SSO-00	SS-01	TRSE-00
	T-01	USIE-00	USSS-00	/063W			

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O 062128Z FEB 92 ZFF4
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8106
INFO AMEMBASSY QUITO IMMEDIATE
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 01259

QUITO PLEASE PASS TO GELBARD AND MCLEAN

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR
TAGS: PREL, MARR, ASEC, SNAR, PGOV, VE
SUBJECT: AFTER THE COUP ATTEMPT/ AFTERNOON OF FEBRUARY 6

REF: CARACAS 01156 AND PREVIOUS

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT
2. CABINET CHANGES?: ONE POPULAR ITEM, ON THE LIST OF
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THINGS THAT CAP MIGHT DO IN REACTION TO THE FEBRUARY 4
EVENTS, IS A CABINET SHAKE-UP. WE HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO
BELIEVE IT, BECAUSE IT SEEMS (TO US) TO MAKE LITTLE
SENSE. HOWEVER, WE KEEP HEARING THE STORY. COPEI
PRESIDENT HILARION CARDOZO SUGGESTED A CABINET OF NATIONAL
UNITY WITH BROAD PARTICIPATION.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] THAT PEREZ MIGHT BRING SOME INDEPENDENTS
INTO THE CABINET. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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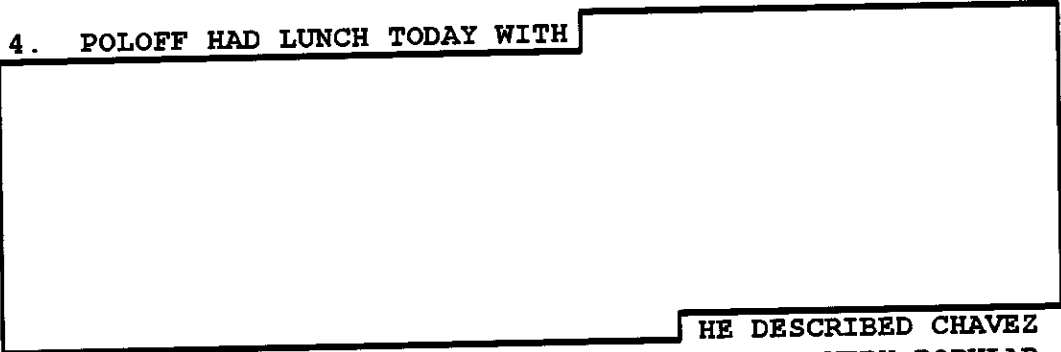
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: NORMAN M BOUTON
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 5 FEB 2017
DATE/CASE ID: 22 JUL 2008 200503656

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3. TROUBLE IN MARACAIBO: CONSULATE REPORTS THAT MARACAIBO WAS A RUMOR MILL THIS MORNING, TOUCHED OFF APPARENTLY BY POLICE AND MILITARY RAIDS AGAINST PRIVATE HOMES (LOOKING FOR RENEGADE OFFICERS AND LOST WEAPONS). AT 10 A.M., CONSULATE TELEPHONE WAS RINGING EVERY MINUTE WITH NEW STORIES ABOUT RIOTS AND SHOOTINGS. RUMORS GRADUALLY DIED DOWN LATER IN THE DAY. CONSULATE VISITED THE LOCATIONS OF THE SUPPOSED INCIDENTS, AND FOUND ALL CALM. HOWEVER, THE INCIDENTS RISK BECOMING SELF-FULFILLING. PARENTS, CONCERNED BY THE STORIES, PULLED THEIR CHILDREN OUT OF HIGH SCHOOLS, AND UNIVERSITY CLASSES (OFFICIALLY OPEN) WERE ALMOST DESERTED. AT 4 P.M. WE HEARD MORE STORIES, INCLUDING ONE FROM AN EMBASSY FSN WHOSE BROTHER CALLED FROM MARACAIBO TO SAY THAT STORES WERE BEING LOOTED IN HIS IMMEDIATE VICINITY.

4. POLOFF HAD LUNCH TODAY WITH



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HE DESCRIBED CHAVEZ AS A ROMANTIC NATIONALIST, VERY INTELLIGENT, VERY POPULAR, AND AN AMATEUR POET WHO CARRIED COPIES OF HIS VERSE TO CLASS.

5. BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE REACTION: THE AMBASSADOR HOSTED A REGULARLY-SCHEDULED ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION AT THE RESIDENCE WITH TOP LEADERS OF THE AMERICAN AND VENEZUELAAMERICAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY, EVENING OF FEBRUARY 5. THE TURNOUT (ABOUT 75) INCLUDED VIRTUALLY ALL THE TOP LEADERSHIP OF THE U.S. INVESTMENT COMMUNITY HERE. THE COUP WAS THE MAIN ITEM OF DISCUSSION. THERE WAS NO SUPPORT FOR THE COUP, BUT CONSENSUS THAT POLITICIANS ARE NOT A POPULAR OR RESPECTED CLASS HERE; THAT THE GOV HAS NOT MADE A GOOD CASE WITH ORDINARY PEOPLE IN FAVOR OF ECONOMIC REFORMS; AND THAT "SOMETHING" SHOULD BE DONE TO ADDRESS POPULAR ECONOMIC DISCONTENTS. YET, WHEN PRESSED TO SUGGEST WHAT COULD AND SHOULD BE DONE, NO ONE RECOMMENDED ABANDONING FUNDAMENTAL ECONOMIC REFORM. SUGGESTIONS BOILED DOWN TO SPENDING A BIT MORE ON SOCIAL PROGRAMS, BETTER PUBLICIZING OF WHAT THE GOV IS DOING, AND (AS SEVERAL NOTED) "THAT CAP SHOULD STAY HOME MORE AND ATTEND TO BUSINESS HERE." IN A SHOW OF HANDS, ONLY 5 OF 75 THOUGHT THAT A REPEAT OF THE COUP ATTEMPT WAS LIKELY WITHIN THE NEXT TWO YEARS.

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6. ANOTHER NICKNAME: LT. COL. CHAVEZ, ALIAS THE "CENTAUR", USED THE CODE NAME "COMANDANTE MAISANTA" FOR THE COUP ATTEMPT. MAISANTA WAS A GUERRILLA WHO BATTLED AGAINST DICTATOR JOSE VICENTE GOMEZ, EARLY IN THIS CENTURY, FROM THE MOUNTAINS OF BARINAS STATE. CHAVEZ' FAMILY HAS DEEP ROOTS IN BARINAS AND STILL OWNS A FARM

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THERE.

7. MORE INVOLVED?: [REDACTED] THAT
ADDITIONAL OFFICERS HAVE BEEN AND ARE BEING ARRESTED, AS
THE INVESTIGATION PROCEEDS. THE GOV IS EVIDENTLY KEEPING
AS QUIET AS IT CAN ABOUT THIS. WASHING DIRTY LINEN IN
PUBLIC IS NOT POPULAR HERE, ESPECIALLY NOT IN THE MILITARY.

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